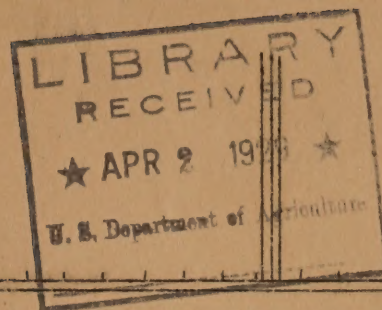


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CIRCULAR LETTERS THAT BRING RESULTS

by

H. W. Hochbaum

Agriculturist, Eastern States
Office of Cooperative Extension Work

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Extension Service.....C. W. Warburton, Director
Office of Cooperative Extension Work..C. B. Smith, Chief
Washington, D. C.

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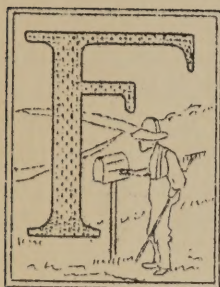
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Circular Letters That Bring Results

H. W. HOCHBAUM,
Agriculturist, Eastern States,
Office of Cooperative Extension Work

Farmer Jones Goes to the Mail Box



ARMER JONES is at work in the barn, for a cold drizzle prevents him from working in the fields. The chug chug of a car draws his attention to the road just in time to answer the friendly greeting waved to him by the mailman. Down he goes to see what was brought him. A newspaper, a farm journal, a catalog, some letters very evidently carrying appeals to buy this or that, and a letter addressed in an official-looking envelope, the familiar penalty envelope, comprise the day's mail.

He is still fingering over the assortment as he steps into the kitchen. "Any mail, Pa?" asks his wife. "Oh, just some papers and advertisements," he answers. "Guess I'll sit here and look this stuff over while you're getting dinner."

Most of the material is neat, colorful, attractive, interesting. Which missives and papers will get his attention? Which will he read? Which will he heed?

Farmer Jones' name is on the mailing lists of many firms. He gets much direct mail matter from them. The circulars, booklets, letters, and cards are prepared by men skilled in the art of writing to win the attention of people and to create a favorable attitude toward the commodities extolled. Thousands of advertisements also prepared in a most expert manner to win his interest come before him continually in the pages of farm journals, magazines, and papers, on billboards and posters, in window displays and other mediums.

All these strive to make Farmer Jones feel certain wants pictured so skillfully to him. All seek to make him feel that this or that will help him satisfy that want - that he will be happier, when he gets this or that solution to his problem, his urges, his driving wants. All urge him to act, and make acting easier by enclosing order blanks, requests for a visit from a salesman, subscription cards, offers of partial-payment plans, and the like. All promise him service, satisfaction with the article to be purchased.

DISTRIBUTION: A copy of this pamphlet has been sent to each extension worker in the Eastern States and to each extension director and State county agent leader in the other States.

Now, Farmer Jones comes to the penalty envelope. Will he open it? Will he read it, or will he give it the "once over" and drop it into the woodbox beside him?

Ah! He opens it and draws out the inclosure. Let us take a look over his shoulder, as he glances over this. Are paper, heading, appearance, paragraphing, typing, neat and attractive? How does this missive compare with the business mail prepared to get his attention, his interest, his action, his purchases. There seems to be too much to read in the letter, and so many mimeographed letters are hard to read, anyway. The text adjures him to use lime and refers to a meeting where this will be discussed. It seems like an old story to Farmer Jones, for the letter goes into the woodbox unread. But he picks up this catalog or that advertising booklet again. Very tactfully he opens up the question of getting this or that with his wife as they sit down to dinner. The first action has been taken.

Can The Penalty Envelope Be Made More Welcome?

What can county extension agents do to make the penalty envelope a more welcome visitor? Discontinue its use and pay postage? Will that make the contents any better; any more likely to be read? Surely the penalty envelope in itself is not to blame. Even business firms use the permit system more and more instead of postage stamps.

How can county extension agents write a circular letter which will move the thousands of Farmer Joneses or Mrs. Joneses to accept the message and do something about it? How may the extension agents compete successfully with business for the farmer's eye, mind, action? Certainly no one should have more of value to the farmer, more right to win him to accept the teachings. Good teaching influences people to want to change and to make these changes successfully. So the extension agent will need to ask, "What moves persons? What influences them to change?"

To begin with, an effective circular letter deals with something the farmer feels, or can be made to feel, he needs. Now, there is often a vast difference between what Farmer Jones, sitting in his home looking over his mail, feels he needs and what the extension worker thinks Farmer Jones needs. The agent may think that because he, or the specialist, or the college feels that the farmer needs this or that, that all should accept the dictums. He may resort to demonstrations, logical argument, to prove to Farmer Jones that he needs to accept specific recommendations. But Farmer Jones, like almost everyone else, is not moved by appeals to reason alone. The thing must appear as an answer to wants within him, a means of meeting unsatisfied desires. No appeal to reason ever gets far unless an appeal to wants is first made.

Human beings are driven by thousands of wants. How is the agent to know which to appeal to? He can get some help by referring to lists of the more common wants presented in such standard texts as "Influencing Human Behavior,"⁽¹⁾ or "The Psychology of Selling and Advertising."⁽²⁾ Yet his first job will always be to study Farmer Jones, to know more of the situations, circumstances, and thoughts of many farmers. Unless he does that he can not hope to make his message felt; unless he can look at the thing through Farmer Jones' eyes his appeals are not likely to be very effective.

You And Your Wants, Farmer Jones, Come First

When these wants are known, no space needs to be wasted in preliminaries. Farmer Jones should find that the first paragraph tells him about wants he has. Indeed, an effective letter appeals directly to Farmer Jones in the very first line. The agent foregoes telling what he or the specialist thinks. He plunges right into the matter of getting Farmer Jones' attention and interest, his recognition of wants that are based on actual needs. The entire first paragraph of an interest-compelling letter would discuss Farmer Jones' problems in terms of the following:

"You, Farmer Jones, have this problem. You are looking for an answer. You have these wants. You want these satisfactions. You can get them if you accept the following recommendations. You will find them to be a solution of your problem. They will bring you a new car, new equipment, money to pay taxes and interest, or to buy conveniences and comforts for your wife and children."

At this stage Farmer Jones should be given little technical information or subject matter in the circular letter. There will be opportunity to give him all the subject matter he needs after he acts. Let him first realize his problem, his wants, and the need for a solution. Let the agent picture only the basic needs and the impelling urge. Farmer Jones will not read much beyond the first paragraph unless it has the "you" appeal; unless it brings him up with a start to a realization that he has the wants and that he wishes to satisfy them.

This technic is illustrated in the heading and first paragraph of a circular letter on soy beans prepared and sent out in early spring by H. S. Heckard, county agricultural agent in Wayne County, Ind. The letter shows a fine picture of farmers drilling in soy beans in a wheat field. At one side of the picture is the challenge, "What's going into your abandoned wheat field?" (Problem-want) At the other side of the picture is the answer, the solution: "Very little preparation will be necessary for soy beans in wheat ground." Then underneath comes the injunction in large letters:

(1) Influencing Human Behavior, H. A. Overstreet. W. W. Norton & Co.

(2) The Psychology of Selling and Advertising, E. K. Strong, jr.

The McGraw-Hill Book Co.

"SOW SOY BEANS AND GROW A GOOD HAY"

The first paragraph of the letter then expands the problem as follows:

"On almost every Wayne County farm there is the problem of deciding what to do with those fields where the wheat has been winter-killed. There were approximately 27,000 acres of wheat sown in Wayne County last fall, and at least 15,000 acres were killed by the severe winter and the land must be seeded to some other crop. Hundreds of acres of alfalfa and clover have also been winterkilled. This means an extreme shortage of hay this summer."

Another example of this technic is found in the first paragraph of a letter prepared by W. R. Wilson, county agricultural agent in Crafton County, N. H.:

"Competition in the dairy business is becoming keener than ever. Cheap feeds in the Middle West are enabling those farmers to ship butter, cream, and even milk into our eastern markets and undersell our products."

Both illustrations ought to get Farmer Jones beyond the first paragraph. Both picture an actual situation, present a problem which he realizes. The second illustration also brings in an appeal to another want - to hold a good market.

The illustration below is from a circular letter prepared by J. W. Kavanaugh, county agricultural agent in Brown County, Wis. This puts the problem up to the reader more directly and brings in the "you" appeal skillfully:

"Can you raise as good clover as you could some years ago? Do you have difficulty getting and keeping good stands of alfalfa? The killing out of clover and alfalfa is getting to be a serious problem on many Brown County farms. The saying that 'Milk flows where alfalfa grows' is true. No other crop means as much to the Brown County dairymen as does alfalfa."

Miss Agnes Slindee, county home demonstration agent, Carroll County, Md., shows in the opening paragraph of a circular letter how aptly she applied this same technic in home demonstration work:

"You know how much time your kitchen work demands. You, no doubt, have often wondered also whether your kitchen work could not be made easier. Probably you have yearned for many improvements and conveniences but put these aside because of the thought that you could not afford them. There are, however, some things which every rural housewife can do with comparatively little expense that will save her many steps, much time, and much labor."

What's Wrong With These Leads?

In contrast to these examples of the direct appeal to problems and wants, which may be felt, the following opening paragraphs from circular letters are given:

"The county-area plan of tuberculosis eradication contemplates the testing of all breeding stock, beef or dairy. This work is cooperative with the county, State, and Federal Governments and is really the only effective way to eradicate T. B. Investigate the plan and if it looks good to you, do your bit to put it into operation."

"The most important animal in a dairy herd is the bull. As he is the sire of all the calves, he alone is responsible for half the individuality and milking ability of the future dairy herd. The cow is important, but she can exert her influence on only one calf a year."

"This advanced project includes a review of good characteristics of body development, and the food-selection score card and standards; daily protein and mineral requirements and the method of meeting requirements; energy needs and calories; how to reduce overweight and increase weight when underweight."

All these presuppose that the would-be reader is interested and only needs to know the best way. They express no felt wants specifically, offer little in the way of satisfactions. Farmer Jones or Mrs. Jones are not likely to be moved by the statements.

If, however, the lead appeals to wants to "you," the farmer or his wife is likely to read on, to chase the thing down further, to find what it is about. At least they will go far enough to find out what the answer is and consider whether it fits his or her situation and wants.

Now Farmer Jones Wants The Answer

This answer, this solution of wants, logically follows in the next paragraph. To the farmer's query, "What of it," the well-planned letter now offers a solution which must appeal to him as the right solution. Here again the "you" appeal has proved its worth. Moreover, no stress is placed upon the technical. A well-written "solution" paragraph presents the solution, the recommended practices as a simple, very practical, and rather easily attainable answer to the reader's problem and wants.

Thus Mr. Heckard follows his statement of the need for something to plant in the frozen-out wheat field, by the following:

"Soy beans can be sown satisfactorily in these fields where the wheat has been killed out. Soy beans will provide an excellent hay for next winter which is equal in feeding value to alfalfa. If the recommended practices listed below are followed you can expect a yield of 2 to 3 tons per acre. It is too late now to consider any other legume to meet the general hay needs for next winter."

Will He Act?

Now Farmer Jones may say, "Well that reads pretty good - that seems reasonable." Then he may be led to do something about it. Perhaps he can be moved to take the first step in changing his practices by sending for more information, for a circular described in attractive terms in the letter. Perhaps he may now go out, though tired from the day's labor and the late chores, plow through mud, rain, or snow, to attend a meeting. It is more likely now that he will be keyed to stop and look at demonstrations, posters, exhibits, or other things used to hold the idea of the better practice before people. Perhaps he may be interested, or follow his children's interest in a slogan, essay, poster, or reasons contest carried on in connection with the project. He will also pay more attention to survey cards which may be sent him or read the news articles and stories about the project which appear in the local paper or farm journals. Maybe he will go on that tour. Perhaps he will talk to his neighbors about the problem and the solution. He may even say, "Ma, I believe there is something in that for us. I'm going to see the county agent."

Action Made Easier

Somewhere in the letter, then, there should be a clause which spurs the reader to act, to do one of the things mentioned above. This can be made easier for the reader if a self-addressed card is inclosed with the circular letter, whereby more readers will be moved to act.

Thus Mr. Heckard closes his letter with the clause:

"If you will sign and return the inclosed card, which needs no stamp, you will be sent further information on growing soy-bean hay."

Mr. Wilson's letter carries three action prompters:

(1) An offer to help find a purebred bull, if the reader will send a card.

(2) A paragraph which calls attention to instructions on growing alfalfa which are inclosed, with the query, "If you have a suitable piece of land and can get lime, why not sow an acre or more of alfalfa on your farm this year?"

(3) A postscript which reads, "If you intend to sow alfalfa this year please sign your name below and return to me. Other valuable information will be mailed to you."

Each of the other letters likewise calls attention to cards inclosed which may be used by the reader to send for more information.

What Satisfactions Will Farmer Jones Get?

Of course, many will hesitate to follow the promptings to act. More can be influenced to do this, however, if the letter pictures the satisfactions which could be won by adopting the recommended solution. So an effective circular letter tells of these satisfactions, or narrates the satisfactions certain individuals in the county have won by following the practices. Perhaps a citation of the number of farmers who have adopted the practice, and the results they have won, would give the reader confidence and lead him to act:

"When I changed from one feeding of alfalfa and one of mixed hay to two feedings of mixed hay per day, my 21 cows dropped from 260 to 240 quarts of milk," said E. L. Smith.

Or:

"Forty-five Grafton County farmers have already signed up to start a field of alfalfa this year."

Or:

"The increased yield of oats or barley the first year often pays for the superphosphate several times over, and the beneficial effects of the superphosphate can often be seen in the alfalfa crop for several years. Many Brown County farmers have used superphosphate for several years and will continue to use it."

Stamp The Solution On The Mind

As Farmer Jones opens a circular letter he is likely to look first at the top and bottom. Perhaps a general impression is all he gets. But if there is a picture at the top, a halftone cut or neat drawing, or an arresting phrase, that may catch his attention. Then he may read the letter. But whether he does or not, the bottom of the letter should arrest his eye and present the gist of what is recommended. If certain better practices are offered as a solution, a means to satisfy his wants, these may be placed as a footing to the letter. If they are couched as terse injunctions, if they epitomize the better method and serve as simple practical directions, they or some of them may be stamped on the mind. Strength is added if these are headed by a phrase that sticks, a command, which tells what the whole thing is about.

The following examples taken from successful letters illustrate this need:

"GROW SOY-BEAN HAY THE RECOMMENDED WAY.

1. Prepare land as for corn.
2. Use Dunfield, Midwest, or Manchu varieties on good soil.
Use Wilson or Virginia on thin soil.
3. Inoculate seed with soil or pure culture.
4. Plant shallow, not over 2 inches deep.
5. Seed $1\frac{1}{2}$ bushels per acre with grain drill.
6. Use harrow until beans are 8 inches high."

"TO MAKE ALFALFA AND CLOVER SURE CROPS.

1. Use 300 pounds of 20 per cent phosphate per acre at seeding time.
2. Use amount of lime as indicated by soil test.
3. On sandy soils also use potash with superphosphate.
4. Inoculate alfalfa seed.
5. Use hardy alfalfa seed and northern-grown clover seed."

"MAKE YOUR KITCHEN WORK EASIER.

1. Raise worktable and bottom of sink to height of wrists when arms hang down.
2. Have worktable on casters so it can be moved near work utensils.
3. Move cooking utensils within 6 feet of stove.
4. Move cleaning utensils to sink."

These terse statements of recommended practices serve a fundamental purpose. They represent subject matter boiled down to the most essential steps which the farmer should accept as a solution to his problem. They are positive, practical directions of what to do. They represent a translation of technical terms and general principles into language which all understand. They are a job analysis which specifies just what to do and how to do it. They are the hurdles over which the farmer has to climb in order to reach the promised satisfaction. The simpler they are stated and the oftener they appear before him, the more likely he will be to recognize them as solutions for his wants.

Tell Them Quickly, Tell Them Often

Farmer Jones will read letters which present the Want-Solution-Action-Satisfaction ideas, when coupled with the "you" appeal. But habits are hard to change. Moreover if Farmer Jones considers adopting the recommended practices he must make readjustments in his farming operations, do things which he has not done before. He must have time to think things

over, to weigh the significance of these changes. He must consider how and when to buy the various things which are called for by the recommended practices. Therefore his resolution to change, to adopt the new practices, must be kept alive. He ought to receive occasional reminders to help him think everything through, to feel sure that he has the problem, that he wants the solution, and will learn to apply it successfully.

Because of these needs, agents and specialists have found that it pays to use a series of circular letters in an important project. Thus a farmer would receive a different letter on the same project every week or 10 days for a month or six weeks. Such letters are sent out in advance of the best dates for inaugurating a practice. In a "Grow healthy chicks" campaign, for instance, the last of a series of letters would reach the farmer in ample time for him to order disease-free chicks or to clean his brooder houses. If alfalfa is the solution to a problem the last of a series of letters would reach the farmer who needs to grow alfalfa in time for him to order lime, seed, fertilizer, and prepare his ground.

Each letter of a series plays the same strain, but with variations which will freshen the farmer's interest and help him make the decisions he should make. Each follows the Want-Solution-Action-Satisfaction formula. Each makes a direct appeal to Farmer Jones. Each presents the recommended practices as a solution to the farmer's wants. Each helps to lead the farmer to make decisions for himself, to the point where he will act. Each letter may be devoted to emphasizing one feature of the Want-Solution, i.e., expand one of the recommended practices. All present some spur to action, for without action there is little learning. The last letter of a series is also used in some States to present an enrollment card. This lists the recommended practices again. If a farmer thinks these fit his needs, he signs the card and returns it to the agent, thus signifying that he will try the recommended practices and report results.

Make Promised Satisfactions More Sure

After Farmer Jones has made his decisions and has acted to accept the recommended changes in practice, he needs to be given all possible help and information, that his success may be more sure. Now is the time to send him seasonal timely hints and reminders, detailed instruction and helps. Now he is likely to welcome bulletins or circulars. Now he will read news articles which cover details of method. Meetings, tours, visits to demonstrations may now be carried on to give him more instruction in trying the recommended practices, the solution.

A cheap and convenient way of providing some of the information needed at this step is the circular letter. In some States another series of letters is planned to follow the first. This series, which may include cards as well as letters, gives Farmer Jones needed timely hints or more detailed instruction.

Thus in a "Wage war on worms and diseases" campaign conducted in New Jersey, attractive, colored, printed, illustrated letters told poultrymen how to screen houses, build screened manure pits or wire dropping boards. In a "Better apples" campaign spray cards go out to the fruit grower which solicit him to look for certain crucial stages in the cycles of insects or diseases, and instruct the grower how to mix and apply control sprays. Likewise some agents who are recommending the growing of alfalfa send farmers who need to grow alfalfa timely hints on how to select fields, take soil samples, test for lime requirement, prepare land, seeding, and summer care. The farmer has responded. Now he needs to be taught success. Then satisfaction will be his and some true learning won.

Too Many Letters?

"What will Farmer Jones do with all these letters?" asks the county agent. Won't they also go into the woodbox unread?

To be sure farmers will toss the letters aside, if they are unattractive, unappealing. Of course they will disregard letters if they present only propaganda. But if the agent knows he is working on basic needs and wants, if he sees these from the farmer's viewpoint, if the solution is practical, if the farmer is taught in the letters to recognize this, if he is led to make his own decisions on these wants and solutions, if the teaching aims at making him successful, satisfied with the changes, why then Farmer Jones will welcome and read these letters. Let the agent worry more about what goes into the letter and less whether Farmer Jones will fret because he is to get too many. So far as number of letters is concerned, it is often the fifth, sixth, or even the last letter in a series which wins the farmer to respond.

A Good Letter Is Pleasing In Appearance

The county agent is looking over his mail. Beside him is a copious waste basket in lieu of a woodbox. What goes into it? What is read? What is held for future reference? Let him analyze his procedure with the daily mail in terms of the formula, Want-Solution-Action-Satisfaction. He holds what interests him. This interest depends upon the attractiveness and general appeal of any piece of mail and upon whether the message carried fits the agent's conscious or subconscious problems and wants.

Many a missive is withheld from the waste basket because it is attractive. That may even give it attention, reading, and later favorable action. So the letters meant for Farmer Jones should be made as attractive as possible. This can be done without sacrificing dignity, earnestness, sincerity.

The first general requirement is good white paper and black ink, a printed letterhead and not a mimeographed one. Yet many, many circular letters do not meet that simple standard. The paper is too soft, too dull, and the ink is often dirty or brownish in appearance. The cooperative heading is sprawled all over the top of the page. The poor impression made is not bettered either by the use of long or legal size sheets. If the agent can not get his letter on one sheet let him use two, but never the awkward legal or copy size sheets. Thousands of improperly addressed letters find their way to the Office of Cooperative Extension Work through the Post Office Department. A study of several weeks' accumulation from four States picked at random may be summarized as follows:

Item	State			
	A	B	C	D
Counties or agents.....	54	24	30	25
Number of letters.....	55	24	30	30
Mimeographed headings.....	23	17	8	17
Printed headings.....	30	7	20	13
Multigraphed headings.....	2	.....	2	.....
Impression not parallel with paper edges.....	.....	.....	.....	4
Uneven inking.....	10	10	7	15
Blurred, faint, hard to read.....	21	8	8	16
Illegible in part.....	8	4	.....	5
Alignment poor.....	3	5	.....	3
Type not cleaned.....	7	2	1	.....
Wrong key struck or letters typed over.....	14	7	4	3
Streaked or smeary.....	5	3	3	6
Illegible signature.....	4	3	.....	4
Jammed-together appearance.....	3	5	2	2
Mimeographed letters rated AI in appearance.....	.....	.....	3	2

This table shows that many circular letters are sent which are not perfect in workmanship and appearance. Undoubtedly hasty, careless workmanship, poor material, unattractive spacing and setting, are doing their share in making farmers shy at the penalty envelope.

Agents who write letters that count know that no letter should leave the office which is not perfect. They know that a letter which pleases and impresses a farmer can not be dashed off between office calls and urgent farm visits. Such a letter requires careful planning, the

selection of good material, the weighing of every word, correct analysis of spacing, margin, set-up, study of the ensemble, the general impression the letter makes. That demands the preparation of a neat dummy. Even then the whole effect can be spoiled by careless stencil cutting, dirty machines, or poor inking and duplicating. Then four out of five may go into Farmer Jones' woodbox.

Prune And Polish

A mistake, an erasure, a poor job, poor diction, in a personal letter is seen only by one person, but by hundreds or thousands in a circular letter. Fogginess, extensionese, redundancy, likewise are noticed now by many. An extension editor in one of the New England States said to the county agents:

"Probably you know the value of verbs that carry punch and of nouns that give your sentences life, and of the weakness of adjectives generally. But occasionally some of you write sentences without a verb and occasionally you lean heavily on adjectives that do not describe, and at times you forget all about unity, emphasis, and coherence, especially coherence.

"Opie Read, the novelist, once told me that he could dictate narrative but that he had to write description in longhand. It is my opinion that some of our specialists think they can dictate anything. Few of them ever revise. It is in revision that you get results. Whether you dictate or write successfully in longhand, don't forget to edit. When you can chop out a sentence without destroying your meaning, you have accomplished something. Then go after superfluous phrases. Finally get down to the useless words, particularly adjectives, articles, and other dead wood."

So many of the circular letters prepared by county agents show a fearsome mass of words and sentences all jammed together. We are headline readers and scared of the solid long paragraph. In the easily read letter each paragraph in the letter does not exceed 8 to 10 lines, with double or triple space between paragraphs, and a margin $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches wide. Each paragraph deals with a subdivision of the main subject. Better still, each paragraph discusses one phase of the Want-Solution-Action-Satisfaction formula. Above all, it must not be forgotten that the farmer will drop the long letter in the woodbox or put it behind the clock until he has time to read it, and that time may never come. Tell the story and be done with it. Then the letter will be read.

No Detours

How the county agent hates the detour! How impatient he gets when road repairs force him to take side roads to get to and from a meeting place. May the remembrance of winding roads and rough spots help him to write letters which start and get somewhere. In such a letter any

extensionese, any technical terms, which might stop the reader like an obstruction in the road are cut out. Generalization and useless modifiers which detour the reader around the main road likewise are stricken out. Each sentence from first to last leads directly to the main thought of a paragraph, each paragraph to the big idea of the letter. "This" is your problem Mr. Jones. Here is a practical solution. Accept that, do something about it. Then this satisfaction will come to you. All this can be done too without using pressure, without being discourteous or untactful.

Of course the letter closes with a snap. It does not close with vague, ineffectual, apologetic statements. It does not apologize or beg. How tired the farmer must be, too, of the constant injunctions: "Do you part!" "You owe it to your community." "Make the meeting a success." "Let us do our bit," which characterizes so many appeals to him.

What is the agent writing the letter for? What does he want the farmer to do? Why trail off at the end into vague statements about "good for you" or "good for the community?" Why not sum up the advantages presented and invite the farmer to do something about them? The following show good and bad closes:

"You ought not to take the risk of big losses again. Call our office and we will tell you where you can buy B.W.D.-free chicks. But don't forget, order early. The supply is limited."

"You owe it to yourself and your community to be informed about this. Hoping to be able to work with you,"

Why Not Print The Letter?

Specialists and agents in at least 20 States place high value on the printed illustrated circular letter. Some very attractive ones have been used in Maine, Connecticut, Vermont, Indiana, Wisconsin, Iowa. These letters cost from \$4.50 to \$8.50 per thousand, depending upon the quantity and local price conditions. This includes paper, printing, and making a halftone cut to illustrate the text. Such letters lend themselves to district or state-wide use in important projects. They are different from the usual run of circular letters. Farmers seem to like them.

Of course, they lack the so-called personal touch, but that is largely a myth where duplicated letters are used. A mimeographed or multigraphed letter, even if the name and address of a farmer are typed in, do not fool many people into believing that they are receiving a personal letter. There is no comparison in appearance, attractiveness, general appeal between the well-edited, printed letter and a mimeographed one.

The following excerpts from the April, 1926, number of Printed Salesmanship present an interesting point of view on such letters.

"No one has a prejudice against printing when it is well done. But there is now a very strong prejudice against the cheap, hasty, begging letters that are dumped upon us by the postman. A typewriter is for the purpose of writing a single personal letter and it is for no other purpose if we use it honestly. There should be no attempt at deception for the public is not easily fooled.

"A sales letter should be an honest printed letter and not a make-believe personal letter.

"When we need the mass production of a letter then there is only one proper machine - the printing press."

Color And Cuts Lend Distinctiveness

Colored paper is often used to lend distinctiveness to a series of letters. Color may be used legitimately in many projects, provided paper of good quality is supplied, and clear, attractive tints are chosen. The experienced agent avoids the too decided shades of blue, red, yellow, or pink. Colored paper is also used with good effect in mimeographed letters. The extension service in New York for several years has used a light green paper for the Alfalfa-graph, a circular letter which goes out to prospective alfalfa growers. There blue paper is used also for a service letter called The New York State Nest Egg that is sent to poultry men; green paper for a service letter sent to farmers interested in farm forestry; a gray paper with red heading for a service letter that goes to fruit growers. Rhode Island uses colored paper for similar mimeographed service letters: Buff for a crop letter, pink for a dairy letter, blue for a fruit letter.

Halftone cuts at the head of a letter likewise are used more and more. They lend attractiveness, arrest attention, and illustrate the text of a letter. The "Grow healthy chicks" letters in Connecticut; the "Better bulls" letters in Maine; the farm-forestry and the "Wage war on worms and disease" letters in New Jersey, are splendid examples of the use of illustrations in circular letters.

Line drawings of diagrams or cartoons serve a similar purpose. There are, however, two general cautions to be noted about the use of such illustrations. One is, that if the drawing is not exceptionally well done, neat, small in size, if it runs all over the page, or if it takes a blue print and slide rule to figure out what the drawing means, then the letter may repel instead of attract. The other caution is not to lampoon the farmer too severely in a cartoon drawing; to poke fun at those who according to the judgment of the writer do not do as they should. The purpose of a letter is to win people, - to lead them to act. Sarcasm, caricature, blame, making people feel inferior, usually repel instead of attracting people.

O. E. Allen, formerly county agent in Cass County, Mo., found that some of the cuts used in farm journals aptly illustrated the teaching on alfalfa. He used various cuts of alfalfa fields to reproduce as halftones at the head of his circular letters on alfalfa, mimeographed on ordinary paper.

Undoubtedly, a slogan or other arresting phrase serves a good purpose when given a prominent place in a letter. Many so-called slogans have little force, however, because they do not hold a central thought or challenge the reader. If a slogan hooks up with the want, and teaches the solution to that want, it is the more valuable. In many instances, slogans serve well if couched as injunctions or commands:

"Center Future Projects in that Central Leader Tree"
(Middlesex County, Mass.).

"Make Your Kitchen Work Easier" (Carroll County, Md.).

"Bring Back Clover" (Licking County, Ohio).

"Grow Thrifty Pigs" (Howard County, Mo.).

Try the Formula

"WANT - SOLUTION - ACTION - SATISFACTION"

